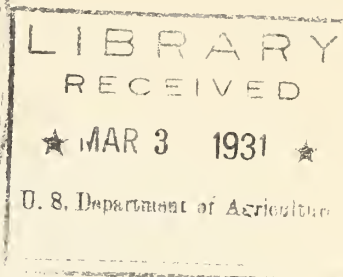
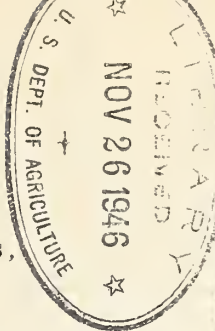


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732 Excerpt from a radio talk by
W. R. M. Wharton, chief, eastern district,
Food and Drug Administration, U. S.
Department of Agriculture, delivered
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HOW TO READ THE LABEL

Tricky Food Labels

Most food manufacturers use honest labels, but a few prepare their labels with a definite purpose to mislead, and the printer's art has developed a method of dissimulation to meet the requirements of all of those who wish to dissemble. The buyer should know the tricks of labeling if she is to become an expert label reader.

Because of the requirements of the Federal food and drugs act and various State food laws, products which are artificially flavored, many of those which are artificially colored, imitation products, and the like, must be correctly labeled to show the fact. And there are many supplementary statements found on food labels to obviate the possibility that such labels will deceive or mislead the purchasers. Many of the required statements are deemed by the manufacturers to stigmatize their goods and so, while they know that they must make the declarations, they do so as inconspicuously as possible. Hence, you may find such essential statements in small type, in some obscure position on the label, or hidden away in other reading matter. You may find colors and backgrounds used which neatly obscure the statements essential for law compliance and consumer understanding. Again, colors and shadings sometimes almost entirely camouflage the statements of which manufacturers are ashamed. Therefore, my friends, do you not see that you must read labels carefully in order to become discriminating buyers. Look with suspicion on products which are labeled in a manner obviously to hide statements which you have a right to know. There is a great temptation, for example, for a manufacturer, who is putting up a 14-ounce package to sell in competition with one which contains one pound, to hide the net-weight statement, "14 ozs" - - but when he does this he has performed a conscious act to mislead, deceive, and defraud you.

It is exceedingly important for the consumer to know the quantity of material in each and every package purchased and the Federal food and drugs act requires that the quantity be stated on the label. Certain manufacturers have practiced various kinds of tricks of labeling to mislead and confuse consumers as to the quantity of food in packages. You are entitled to know the net weight, but manufacturers who wish to hide from you the true facts, sometimes declare weights as "gross weight," or as "gross weight when packed." Sometimes the declaration is made on transparent wrappers of the package so that when you get the package home, unwrap it and examine it, the net-contents statement is unwittingly

removed and thrown away. Some manufacturers use decimal fractions in such a way as to be confusing as, for example, ".750 GALLON," which means three quarts if you know how to read it. Statements are also made in terms of drams or grains or cubic centimeters or liters, terms with which you may not be familiar. To illustrate: when a bottle of vanilla extract is labeled 6 drams, as has been done, would you know, off-hand, that the bottle contains only $3/4$ of one ounce? Such a declaration is a tricky one, to conceal the fact of the very small quantity in the bottle. Another trick is to display in a show window an advertisement of a product, let us say butter, at such and such a price "per pound." Naturally, when the article advertised is purchased, the consumer expects to get a pound. When this is a trick, unless you read the label, you may never become aware that you really have received only 14 or 15 ounces.

Get out the old arithmetic and learn your weights and measures tables all over again, especially weight and measure equivalents. Certain liquid products may be labeled interchangeably in terms of "avoirdupois" and "liquid" measure. In both of these systems, the term, "ounce," is used. When the term, "ounce," appears alone on a label, it is understood to mean "weight" and when measure is intended, the word, "ounce," is preceded by the word, "fluid." Now a bottle of maple sirup, labeled as containing "8 ounces" or "8 ounces avoirdupois," really contains only six fluid ounces. On the other hand, 70% sugar sirup with a specific gravity of 1.35, may be labeled 11 ounces avoirdupois but will represent only eight fluid ounces, or $1/2$ pint. Some manufacturers have adopted the policy of selling olive oil in cans correctly labeled as containing .98 gallon. The trick is that these .98-gallon cans sell in competition with full-gallon cans. This practice is legal - but deceptive and tricky.

Another trick of labeling is to select a brand name which will give a misleading impression as to the character of the product. To illustrate: "Rose Leaf Brand Lard" does not mean leaf lard, a product of higher quality than ordinary lard. "English Brand Mustard" does not necessarily mean that the product was made in England. "Favorite Brand Jam" does not indicate necessarily that the jam is such a favorite that consumers crowd each other to buy it. Brand names serve to identify the products of different manufacturers. They should have no other significance to consumers.

Still another trick of labeling is to name a product incompletely, thus creating a false impression. For example, "Golden Corn" may be understood by the buyer to be "Golden Bantam Corn" and the label, "White Meat Fish," may be understood by the purchaser to be "White Meat Tuna Fish," unless that buyer reads labels understandingly. Labels generally fail to give all the information which would aid you to buy intelligently. Omissions are the general rule --- not the kind of omissions illustrated --- but omissions which fail to advise as to quality, kind, variety, condition, and relative value. The law does not positively require information of this kind but if a million housewives will demand full labels and back up their demands persistently, the manufacturers of the country can do nothing less than comply and furnish more informatively labeled food products.